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The author says that, though the colony is British in name, it is really quite as much American as British; which is to be expected, as the United States take four-fifths of the exports and supply over one-half of the imports. The concluding chapters are of special interest to tourists, telling them of much that they should see and of many things they should not do. The numerous water-colours are a very attractive feature of the book.

**Indiscreet Letters from Peking, being the Notes of an Eye-Witness, which set forth in some Detail, from Day to Day, the Real Story of the Siege and Sack of a Distressed Capital in 1900—the Year of Great Tribulation. Edited by B. L. Putnam Weale.** New York, Dodd, Mead and Company, 1907. 447 p.

A German professor of law once made the psychology of the testimonies of eye-witnesses the subject of his investigations with a body of students. One of the exercises consisted in the following experiment. Suddenly, during the discussions, several students, on previous agreement with the instructor, but without the knowledge of the rest, arose and produced a sham-fight for just a few minutes, and the other students were then assigned the task of writing down their observations as in an affidavit, with the result that their depositions varied most widely and not one tallied with another. I never fail to think of this experiment whenever I try to compare and to reconcile the various reports given by eye-witnesses of the Boxer uprising and the siege of Peking. Much has been published about these events—much of very contradictory character—but it is nevertheless impossible to sift the truth in all points, or even in just those which are important, and to write the real history of that unprecedented movement and the reaction that followed it. Every new contribution, whether in the form of a diary or of memoirs, which may tend to clear up the situation during that epoch, or even some incidents only, must therefore be welcome as building material for the future historian. From this point of view the present publication secures its passport of legitimacy, despite its appearance so long *post festum*. The preface is dated "China, June, 1900," which is evidently an error, as at the close of it the siege of Port Arthur is alluded to, and the last chapters of the diary carry us down to October, 1900. The diary itself does not in all places convey the impression that it was actually and contemporaneously penned during the course of the events; many passages breathe too much foresight of what is to come, and in others the retouching becomes plain from an additional "as I shall show hereafter." When we are assured by the foreword that "much in these notes has had to be suppressed for many reasons, and much that remains may create some astonishment," it is to be regretted that no more vigorous and self-denying editing has been applied to a volume in which valuable accounts are intermingled with numerous worthless personal details and an obtrusive, most unpleasant animosity towards nearly every participant in the affairs. The unreserved exposure of the irritable nerves of the diary-writer, who gives vent to his pent-up anger at the inefficient diplomats in language not always diplomatic, leaves a bitter taste in the mouth of the reader, and thus many of his statements lose their convincing force. The reviewer speaks advisedly, as he had the pleasure of knowing personally most of the men, who are cited in the diary with their initials only. True it is—and in this point we concur with the diarist—that the extraordinary situation did not find the right man to face it, and that the only man who was probably equal to it met a premature and tragical fate; but we must not forget that such an extraordinary situation called for an extraordinary man, and that not all men are extraordinary, even if they are envoys

extraordinary. True it is, also, that the Ministers did not act the part of heroes during the siege; but this, as well as the previous and other points, could be told in a more dignified manner and with greater impartiality than in the harsh and passionate words of Putnam Weale. He doubtless possesses a great amount of common sense and sound judgment. Some of the characteristics which he gives of personages—as, for example, Baron von Kettler—are surprisingly true and to the point; but the merciless and scornful exposition of only the petty, feeble sides of men in responsible offices, who, after all, are only human beings, does not mean the writing of history or the writing for history.

Much of the siege was earnest, much, also, was of the character of a comedy; and the crucial test of the historian to come will be the decision of what was real and what existed only in the overstrained and almost hysterical imagination of the beleaguered. According to all we now know, the attempt to magnify the siege as a gallant and heroic defence is out of place. The Chinese, if they but wanted, could have easily stormed the British Legation and massacred all its inmates. In this point Putnam Weale is right, beyond any doubt, in his assertion that it was the division of counsels among the Chinese which alone saved every one from a shameful death. This side of the affair still belongs to the mysteries hidden behind the curtain of the Chinese stage of action; and it would be worth while living to the time when the official history of the present dynasty shall be published, that one may be able to read the whole Chinese version of the course of events. The vivid description of the barbaric loots and outrages of the foreign troops, and the author's condemnation of these brutalities are perfectly justifiable, and if not always his mode of expression, at least his sincerity and straightforwardness must be acknowledged. On the whole, his diary offers very interesting contributions to psychology rather than to history, although, also, the future historian of "Peking 1900" will have to make use of it to some advantage; but we see no reason to envy him this arduous task.

B. L.

**Die Völker Chinas. Vorträge, gehalten im Seminar für orientalische Sprache zu Berlin von Alfred Forke.** Berlin, Karl Curtius, 1907. 90 p.

This paper, which has grown out of two public lectures delivered last winter at the Oriental Seminary of Berlin, contains, for popular instruction, the more noticeable facts of modern Chinese life, with side-lights on the Manchu, the peoples of Mongolia, Turkistan, and Tibet. It is unpretentious, offers no new material and no novel ideas, but is quite commendable as a first aid to those who are desirous of seeking succinct information on the subject. The character of these notes is entirely synthetic, no analysis or interpretation of phenomena being given, and the author's attitude towards many questions cannot always be approved of from the standpoint of a student of culture.

B. L.